

Animals and Ecology: The Middle Ages
ENGL 80700 [cross-listed with MSCP 80500]
CUNY Grad Center, Room 4433, Mondays 11:45-1:45

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“For anyone who doubts that a horse is by its very nature better than wood, and that a human being is more excellent than a horse, should not even be called a human being.”

Anselm, *Monologion*

Oister: Listen then, but before we proceed in our discourse, you must promise me beforehand, that while I open (as you see) to speak, you will take care that those Roguy confounded Crabs shall not throw a stone between my two shells, which would hinder me from shutting 'em ever after.

Giovanni Gelli, *La Circe*
translated by Thom. Brown

“Animals and Ecology: The Middle Ages” will introduce students to the more recent strains of critical animal theory and ecocriticism and consider how this thought might respond to and be transformed by its encounter with medieval cultures. Critical animal theory exploded in interest a little more than a decade ago, primarily through the work of Cary Wolfe, and a critical canon was quickly established, centering largely on Derrida's *The Animal that Therefore I am* and a few other books, such as Giorgio Agamben's *The Open*.

With its bestiaries, its art that loved to represent animal/human/vegetable hybrids, its heraldry, hunting, and “household pigs,” and a literature more than happy to include talking animals, medieval studies has been particularly well suited to engage with these fields. Articles and, eventually, books began appearing in earnest over the last 7 or 8 years, although earlier cultural engagements with literal medieval animals date back at least 20 years ago to Joyce Salisbury's *The Beast Within*. We are therefore now well placed to consider what might be called, clumsily, the second wave of Medieval Critical Animal/Eco Studies.

We can readily identify how the dominant medieval intellectual traditions sought to establish human difference. It's easy to link Augustine to Aquinas to Descartes as the enemies of all animalkind. Many other medieval texts, however, concentrate not on cognition and the possession of a soul but on vulnerability, heterogeneous needs, and scales of time in which humans appear as just one more compromised actor among others. Such texts often acknowledge the existence of subjectivities completely different from the more familiar lives, emotions, and needs of humans. With these texts, we will work over questions like the following: do animals have a particular claim on us, more than, say, plants? Which animals and why? How might swarms challenge an ethics based on individuals? How does renewed interest in nonhuman materialisms compel a rethinking of the usual arguments of critical animal studies?

Credit Options:

As with most English Program courses, you can register for ENGL 80700 for either **2.0** (graded P/F) or **4.0** credits (regular letter grade). If you are not an English Program student and are registered for 2.0

credits, confirm that your home program allows this, as some programs require that every course counting toward your required 60 credits of coursework receive a letter grade. Students taking the class for 2.0 credits will do all reading, participate in class discussions, do the in-class, oral presentations, and join others in writing the weekly summaries of class discussion. Students taking the course for 4.0 credits will do all this and also write a final seminar paper along with its preparatory assignments.

Students taking the course for **3.0** credits as MSCP 80500 will do all assignments for the class, but can write a final paper that is somewhat shorter (10-15 pages) than that required of students doing ENGL 80700 for 4.0 credits.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the semester, students will be able to do:

- discuss, write about, and teach a wide range of medieval works;
- analyze a variety of historical and theoretical approaches to nonhuman animals and ecology, and incorporate such approaches into their own critical writing;
- consider how thinking about nonhuman animals and ecology in the contemporary world might be understood in ways both similar to and different from medieval understandings.

TEXTS and READING

You are encouraged to do some reading *before* the class begins. If you are not comfortable with Middle English, try to get comfortable. Harvard's METRO site is especially useful:

<http://metro.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do>. You might also familiarize yourself with some of the basics of critical animal studies. Read Derrida's "The Animal that Therefore I am" (available in a volume bearing the same title) and several chapters in my *How to Make a Human: Animals and Violence in the Middle Ages*: I recommend the Introduction, Chapter 3, and the Epilogue. It's available as a PDF here: https://www.dropbox.com/s/2kogaeb5a0egel5/Steel_2ndproof.pdf. You might also want to watch this video of my introduction to Critical Animal Studies: <http://vimeo.com/56740190>

We will also be generating a collaborative bibliography on critical animal studies, ecotheory, materialism, and, if possible, their relationship to medieval studies on Wikispaces:

<http://medievalanimalsandecology.wikispaces.com/Living+Bibliography>. Everyone in the class will be granted permission to edit it, and I will ask you to join me in regularly adding items. You can log in with whatever webservice you like. Just bookmark the page and access it regularly.

Also, please obtain a copy of each of the following in some form. It's fine with me if you use Ebooks and PDFs on tablets or other larger touchscreen computers, but you'll want to mark key passages in advance of class discussion. Other course readings will be provided as PDFs or otherwise will be made available electronically.

Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland*, trans. John O'Meara [from the first recension] (New York: Penguin, 1983), ISBN 0140444238.

If you'd like to check the Latin, here is the text of the first recension,

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/zjy6ba9v8yg2l9u/gerald%20topographia%20hibernie%20first%20recension.pdf>; for the second recension,

<https://archive.org/stream/giraldicambrensi05gira#page/n11/mode/2up>; for a digitized, lavishly illustrated manuscript, see British Library, Royal MS 13 B VIII, 1r-34,

http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Royal_MS_13_b_viii

Chaucer, Geoffrey. *Parliament of Fowles and House of Fame*. I'll be using the *Riverside Chaucer*, which many of you might already own; otherwise, you can use the *Dream Visions and Other Poems* (ISBN 0393925889) published by Norton, ed. Kathryn Lynch. Whatever edition you use should have the text in Middle English. You'll also want the Prioress's Portrait from the General Prologue of *The Canterbury Tales*.

Henryson, Robert, *The Complete Works*, ed. David J. Parkinson (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2010). ISBN 9781580441391

The text is available for free online at

<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/parkinson-henryson-the-complete-works>

If you are buying the book used, be careful to get this edition rather than the 1997 one by Kindrick. The 2010 Parkinson edition improves on Kindrick in several respects, perhaps most usefully, by providing a substantial introduction to reading Middle Scots and by glossing the text more thoroughly, making it easier for to read. If you'd like to see the 1570 edition like the one Parkinson used, go to EEBO (avail. in Grad Center Library Databases) and do a keyword search for "Henrisone."

Thacker, Eugene. *In the Dust of This Planet: Horror of Philosophy vol. 1*. (Alresford, UK: Zero Books, 2011). ISBN 184694676X

The Saga of the Volsungs, trans. Jesse Byock (New York: Penguin, 2004). ISBN 0140447385.

I do not read Old Norse, but if you do, let us know. If you're buying a different translation, get one done first within your lifetime, as earlier translations often archaize the language, which is interesting for a history of medievalism, but perhaps less interesting for us. A not cheap facing page edition is available through here:

<http://aq-verlag.de/bibliotheca-germanica-series-nova/vol-3-volsunga-saga/>

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Any edition is fine; a translation is fine, actually, if you're not comfortable with Middle English, but ideally you'll read it in Middle English.

Wolfe, Cary. *Before the Law: Humans and Other Animals in a Biopolitical Frame* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), ISBN 0226922413.

January	
Jan 27	<p>General Approaches</p> <p>Genesis 1-3</p> <p>John Lydgate, "The Fiftene Tokyns afor the Doom" https://archive.org/stream/minorpoemsofjohn00lydguoft#page/116/mode/2up)</p> <p>Souillac Column: http://www.flickr.com/photos/sharmanka/sets/72157626077568847/</p> <p>"The Wolf Child of Hesse" (translation in <i>Animal, Vegetable, Mineral: Ethics and Objects</i>, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Washington, DC: Oliphaunt Books, 2012))</p> <p>Exemplum 453, "Luporum more currit et ululat aliquis," in <i>An Alphabet of Tales</i>, ed. Mary Macleod Banks, Vol II. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1905) https://archive.org/stream/analphabettales01ligoog#page/n68/mode/2up</p>
February	

Feb 3	Theoretical Principles for Animal Studies Wolfe, <i>Before the Law</i> Short medieval hunting law translated here: http://www.inthemedievalmiddle.com/2012/06/forest-law-and-deers-lively-carcass.html Short medieval readings: “Melion,” http://www.liv.ac.uk/media/livacuk/cultures-languages-and-area-studies/liverpoolonline/Werwolf.pdf Chaucer's portrait of the Prioress from the General Prologue to <i>The Canterbury Tales</i>
Feb 10	Animal Communities/Talking Animals Chaucer, <i>Parliament of Fowles</i> and <i>House of Fame</i> Donna Haraway, <i>When Species Meet</i> , introduction
Feb 20 (Thurs)	Animals, Violence, and Sympathy Henryson, <i>The Morall Fabillis</i> Donna Haraway, <i>When Species Meet</i> , introduction (continue discussion)
Feb 24	Animals and Lineage Marie de France, “Guigemar,” “Yonec,” and “Bisclavret” (from the <i>Lais</i>) “Androcles and the Lion [and the Bear Mother],” in <i>The Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum</i> , ed. Sidney J. H. Herrtage (London: Trübner & Co., 1879), 327-331, https://archive.org/stream/earlyenglishver03herrgoog#page/n364/mode/2up Geoffrey of Auxerre, <i>On the Apocalypse</i> , Joseph Gibbons, trans., 139-57 [Melusine]; <i>Alphabet of Tales</i> #653 on the Prince of Crete, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/cme/AlphTales/1.657?rgn=div1;view=fulltext . Jeffrey J. Cohen, “The Werewolf’s Indifference,” <i>Studies in the Age of Chaucer</i> 34.1 (2012): 351-356. Susan Crane, “Wolf, Man, and Wolf-Man,” in <i>Animal Encounters: Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain</i> (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 42-68
March	
March 3	Talking Back <i>Testamentum Porcelli</i> ; “By a Forest as I gan fare” DIMEV 922, from <i>Middle English Lyrics</i> , ed. Maxwell S. Luria and Richard L. Hoffman (New York: Norton, 1974): 123-25; Middle English “Balaack and Balaam” from <i>The Chester Plays</i> ; Thomas Brown translation of G. Gelli, <i>Circe</i> , Book 1 (On the Oyster and the Mole); “Complaint of the Birds to Luther against Wolfgang,” trans. in Preserved Smith, <i>The Life and Letters of Martin Luther</i> (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), 360-61 https://archive.org/stream/lifeandlettersm00smitgoog#page/n404/mode/2up ; Margaret Cavendish, “The Hunting of the Hare,” http://xtf.lib.virginia.edu/xtf/view?docId=chadwyck_ep/uvaGenText/tei/chep_1.0848.xml;chunk.id=d165 ; Choose any three from <i>Phaen/Ex</i> 8.3 (2013), on “Animal and Food Ethics” http://www.phaenex.uwindsor.ca/ojs/leddy/index.php/phaenex/issue/current/showToC
March 10	The Manuscript Turn in Medieval Animal Studies John Lydgate, “Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep.”

	<p>Readings on “the manuscript turn” from Sarah Kay (<i>Postmedieval</i> 2.1 (2011): 13-32), Bruce Holsinger (“Uterine Vellum, A Florilegium,” http://burnablebooks.com/uterinevellum/), Elaine Treherne (<i>Postmedieval</i> 4.4 (2014): 465-78), and selections from Katie Walter, ed. <i>Reading Skin in Medieval Literature and Culture</i> (available through Palgrave Connect)</p>
March 17	<p>Other European Traditions <i>The Saga of the Volsungs</i> Geoffrey of Monmouth, <i>Vita Merlini</i>, selections, http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/eng/vm/vmeng.htm (from <i>University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature</i> 10.3 (1925)) Everyone: find a relevant or interesting scholarly article on your own and come in ready to talk about it and how it enriches this week's reading.</p>
March 24	<p>Theoretical Principles for Ecostudies Gerald of Wales, <i>History and Topography of Ireland</i> Serenella Iovino, “Steps to a Material Ecocriticism. The Recent Literature About the “New Materialisms” and Its Implications for Ecocritical Theory,” <i>Ecozon@</i> 3.1 (2012): http://www.ecozona.eu/index.php/journal/issue/view/7/showToc Pick two from <i>Postmedieval</i> 4.1 “Ecomaterialism”</p>
March 31	<p>Into the Wild? The Anglo-Norman <i>Voyage of St. Brendan</i>, translation from Appendix 2, Jude S. Mackley, <i>Northern World : The Legend of St Brendan : A Comparative Study of the Latin and Anglo-Norman Versions</i> Jane Bennett, “A Vitalist Stopover on the Way to a New Materialism,” in Diana Coole and Samatha Frost, eds., <i>New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics</i> (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 47-69 Pick two more from <i>Postmedieval</i> 4.1 “Ecomaterialism”</p>
April	
April 7	<p>Settlement, Food, and The Origins of Culture Ruth Evans, “Gigantic Origins: An Annotated Translation of <i>De Origine Gigantum</i>,” <i>Arthurian Literature</i> 16 (1998): 197-211. Jean de Wavrin, <i>Recueil des croniques et anchiennes istories de la Grant Bretagne</i>, in <i>A Collection of the Chronicles and Ancient Histories of Great Britain, Now Called England</i>, trans. William Hardy (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1864), 1: 4-29, https://archive.org/stream/acollectionchro00hardgoog#page/n92/mode/2up Serpil Oppermann, “Material Ecocriticism and the Creativity of Storied Matter,” https://www.academia.edu/5330227/Material_Ecocriticism_and_the_Creativity_of_Storied_Matter to appear here: http://www.tijdschriftframe.nl/portfolio/item/frame-26-2-ecocriticism/ selections from Marx, <i>The German Ideology</i> on human/animal difference Due: One paragraph sketch of final project</p>
SPRING BREAK	
April 28	<p>Death and Waste Middle English “Debate Between the Body and the Worms”</p>

	<p>Middle English <i>Vision of Tundale</i> http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/foster-three-purgatory-poems-vision-of-tundale-introduction Eugene Thacker, <i>In the Dust of this Planet</i></p>
May	
May 5	<p>Plant Thought Two episodes from the Alexander Legend: Alexander and Dindimus and the “Tree Women” Alexander and Dindimus: Ranulf Higden and John Trevisa, <i>Polychronicon</i>, ed. Joseph Rawson Lumby (London: Longman & Co., 1865), 3:454-79 https://archive.org/stream/polychroniconran03higd#page/454/mode/2up Tree Women: read Peggy McCracken, “The Floral and the Human,” in <i>Animal, Vegetable, Mineral: Ethics and Objects</i>, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Washington, DC: Oliphaunt Books, 2012), 91–122 Dominic Pettman, “The Noble Cabbage [Review of Michael Marder’s <i>Plant-Thinking</i>],” <i>Los Angeles Review of Books</i>, July 28, 2013, https://lareviewofbooks.org/review/the-noble-cabbage-michael-marders-plant-thinking/ Due: Prospectus/Annotated Bibliography for Final Project</p>
May 12	<p>The Nonhuman in/with the Familiar <i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> Eileen A. Joy, “Weird Reading” in <i>Speculations IV</i> http://punctumbooks.com/titles/speculations-issue-iv/</p>
May 19	<p>Final Paper presentations Even if you're not writing a paper, please attend and give your colleagues your support.</p>
May 26	Final Paper (15-20 pages) Due